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ABSTRACT

Prisoners' need for education and training is universal. A review of past educational programs for prisoners, as well as current "inside" and "outside" college programs for prisoners demonstrates that the use of college resources as a program alternative differs from situation to situation and from country to country. How prisoners can reasonably be expected to become involved in postsecondary education during imprisonment, where, and when to use college resources as a program alternative also differs from situation to situation. Costs, facilities, post-release problems, and transfer of credits are problems also discussed. (Author/KE)

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POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR PRISONERS

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Postsecondary Education Programs For Prisoners

Various writers have tried to establish a chronology of prison education programs. They suggest that in the late eighteenth century and continuing into the nineteenth most prisons in the United States, Canada, South America and Western Europe conducted religious services and classes under the impression that such instruction would help prepare prisoners for a christian and, therefore, a non-criminal life. Obviously, if prisoners couldn't read, the wisdom of the bible would be denied them, so literacy instruction was initiated, frequently by the prison chaplain who used volunteer theological students as instructors. It, therefore, appears that education programs in prisons are as old as the prisons themselves.

From these early beginnings, education programs, particularly in United States prisons, moved forward at different rates and in different ways depending on the individual state and, in many cases, on the individual institution in a particular state. The U. S. federal system sometimes reflected developments initiated at the state level; at other times, the federal system led the way. Commitment to education came relatively early from leaders of U. S. prison systems, at least in principle if not in fact.

In 1870 at the first meeting of the National Prison Association (now the American Correctional Association) a Declaration of Principles provided strong, if somewhat melodramatic, support for education:

> "Education is a vital force in the reformation of fallen men and women. Its tendency is to quicken the intellect, inspire self-respect, excite to higher aims, and afford a helpful substitute for low and vicious amusements. Education is, therefore, a matter of primary importance in prisons, and should be carried to the utmost extent consistent with the other purposesof such institutions".

Despite these high sounding words, bona-fide education programs in American prisons were not implemented for years, and, indeed are still lacking in many individual institutions and exist only to a modest degree in both "modern" and developing countries.

Where education and occupational programs are provided the quality of such programs and the degree of prisoner participation vary widely, ranging from youth institutions exclusively devoted to education, to adult, long term institutions in which education and training opportunities are marginal. College level programs for prisoners are infrequent outside the United States and appear to be in early experimental/developmental stages in most countries. Where they exist they are

frequently provided via correspondence courses and have been available in this form for many years in the United States, Canada, England, France, the Scandinavian countries and to a limited degree, in Yugoslavia and Austria.

Study release for college courses is a newer concept and is just beginning to receive significant support in the United States, Canada, Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries. A small number of prisoners in Sweden, for example, is permitted study release to university adult education centers. Kerle (1973) reported that 32 prisoners were involved in "University Without Walls" programs in Great Britain and that the number was expected to double in the next year or so.

Generally speaking, however, college level courses for prisoners either inside the institution or on a study release basis to campus classrooms do not exist to any appreciable degree outside the United States, Canada, England, France and the Scandinavian countries.

Data available for the United States suggest a significant rate of growth in all kinds of prison college programs in recent years. In 1966 the Ford Foundation funded a nationwide survey of college level programs in U. S. Prisons. Fifty-one prisons systems were surveyed and forty-six responded. Of these, twenty-seven offered

college level correspondence courses; seventeen, extension courses; three televised instruction, and three, study-release opportunities. No system offered the possibility of obtaining a B.A. degree and only seven indicated that they provided or planned to provide the possibility of getting an A.A. or comparable two-year degree. It was estimated from the 1966 survey that less than 1,000 prisoners were involved in college level correspondence courses and about 2,000 in college extension courses; presumably all or most inside the prison.

Minimum Standards for the Treatment of Offenders adopted by the United Nations in 1955 in Geneva at the First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders included a section on "Education and Recreation" and urged that provision be made for education, religious instruction, recreation and cultural activities of prisoners.

Stronger language was used for illiterates and young prisoners; in such cases education was urged to be "compulsory".

A far sighted section (77(2)) encouraged "so for as practicable, the education of prisoners shall be integrated with the educational system of the country so that after their release they may continue their education without difficulty."

Under the heading INSTITUTIONAL PERSONNEL, there is an additional proviso that in so far as possible ". . . the personnel shall include a sufficient number of specialists such as . . . . teachers and trade instructors . . ."

A United Nations Congress will be meeting in Geneva, Switzerland during September 1975. This Congress will no doubt have more to say on the subject of education and training in prisons.

Prisoners' Need for Education and Training is Universal

Prisoners throughout the world share common characteristics; they are generally poor, unskilled and uneducated. For these and related reasons prison education programs, where they exist, tend to emphasize basic reading skills, occupational training and the achievement of secondary level certification. Prison college programs can only be relevant in countries where the general level of education is high enough to provide potential students both in and out of prison for college level classes.

These conditions do not prevail at this time in most countries throughout the world. In the United States, Canada, Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries there exist, at highly differential rates, enough prisoner/students who have either completed a secondary education or can do so readily enough while imprisoned to profit from postsecondary level programs.

There are no precise figures of the number of prisoners in the United States or elsewhere currently involved in postsecondary education programs. We estimate that in the United States the number ranges somewhere between 1% and 5%, or roughly between a low of 2,500 and a possible high of 12,500. Dell'Apa (1973) found the figure to be less than 6% (around 6,400 out of 109,161 prisoners), based on a 60% (150 institutions) response to questionnaires sent to 249 adult correctional institutions.

In the federal system in the United States we know that in 1975 inmates completed approximately 9,000 college level courses totalling 27,000 earned college credits. If we assume an average enrollment of 3 courses per student, approximately 3,000 federal prisoners were enrolled in postsecondary programs during 1975.

One hundred and seventy-nine college degrees were earned during the same year; 158 two-year degrees; 19 baccalaureate degrees; and 2 master's degrees. College programs in the federal system are expanding apparently due, in part, to the growing proportion of inmates who have completed high school and the availability of a variety of forms of tuition assistance.

The proportion of state prisoners involved in postsecondary programs is probably somewhat lower than that in the federal system, with the possible exception

of a few individual states.

While these enrollment and earned degree figures are not unduly impressive, it is significant that estimated prison college enrollments in the United States did escalate from an estimated total of 3,000 in 1968 (adult and youth) to over 6,400 in adult institutions alone in 1973, a doubling in less than a decade and possibly a tripling if full data on youth enrollments were known.

In Canada college programs in prisons appear to be confined to five federal penitentiaries in the Western provinces involving possibly approximately 200 prisoners, primarily in classes inside the prison with a handful involved in study release, "open" university or correspondence courses. The same modest level of prisoner participation in postsecondary programs appears to be true of England, France and the Scandinavian countries, and exists on even a smaller scale in Yugoslavia and Austria.

A 1972 tabulation from France shows that approximately 115 prisoners, less than 1% of the total (29,600), were pursuing college level studies. It would appear that where prison college programs are being introduced their introduction is directly related to the general education level and education participation

rates of the non-prison population.

With respect to the United States, not only has the number of college programs in prisons increased significantly in recent years, but the manner in which programs are offered has become highly diversified.

"Inside" College Programs

Courses offered inside prisons are the oldest. Some of these courses were available as early as 1939 in the United States and probably in Western Europe and predate even the earliest prison college surveys.

Prisons at San Quentin, California, Jolliet, Illinois and Leavenworth, Kansas, institutions serving long-term prisoners, introduced college programs long before the current wave of interest in prison education developed. All classes, because of security requirements, took place inside the institutions, in traditional classrooms, or through correspondence courses.

More recent developments within higher education communities as well as in the prisons themselves are contributing to the establishment of new delivery systems for college courses both "inside" and "outside" prison.

The "University Without Walls" (UWW) in the

United States, and the "Open University" in Canada and England offer new opportunities for prisoners to undertake full college programs independent of the traditional classroom, on an individualized basis, without leaving the prison.

Close circuit television, audio and audio-visual tapes and tape cassettes also bring additional program opportunities into the prisons for classes as well as for individual students.

"Outside" College Programs - Study-Release

The logistics of providing prisoner access to college classes outside the prison are more complicated. Despite substantial success with such study-release programs their rate of growth continues to be very slow in all countries. Upward Bound/Newgate efforts which initially began in the United States in Oregon, Kentucky, Minnesota, New Mexico and Pennsylvania combined both "inside" and "outside" courses of study, arranged so that the outside portion coincided with the approach of a student's release date. As the initial fundings of these programs by the Office of Economic Opportunity were absorbed by the correctional systems themselves, the outside portion of the program diminished in duration and importance. However, these programs continue to function, funded by correctional institutions, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and the U. S. Office of Education.

A limited number of postsecondary occupational training programs in the United States also combine "inside" and "outside" classes. In some few cases nearby area vocational technical schools and community colleges provide all instruction on an "outside" basis. Prisoner/students sometimes participate in the same classes as regular students; in other cases the prisoners comprise a separate class. Prisoner/student classes take place both during daytime and evening hours depending on scheduling problems and community and correctional institution flexibility.

Innovative experimental/demonstration projects also provide the opportunity for a small number of students to live on campus either in separate, supervised halfway house arrangements or in regular student housing. A co-ed residential center for prisoner/students was established in 1975 at the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California. Federal prisoners from correctional institutions in California are involved in this program. Currently, approximately twenty men and women, all within one year from a release date, live in this supervised center and attend university classes on a full-time basis.

Post Release College Programs

An underlying agenda of all prison education efforts is the development of the students' continuing interest in education both as a means of staying out of prison and of enriching their personal lives. Most people who work with prisoners can cite impressive anecdotes about an individual's continuation of post-secondary studies after release from prison but, except for isolated follow-up studies, we lack significant data regarding what portion of prisoner - college-students continue to attend college after release and actually receive either two or four year degrees or postsecondary technical or professional school certification.

Marshall Kaplan, Gans and Kahn's (1972) follow-up study of Newgate students in the United States reported a wide variety of problems, conceptual as well as practical, inherent in post-relase education linkages. Continued identification as an offender, lack of emotional as well as financial support systems, overly intensive parole supervision, time gaps between release and college enrollment are but a few of the problems which require attention if post-release college programs are to be effectively linked with pre-release programs.

Current Trends

It is difficult to assess how many prisoners could reasonably to be expected to become involved in postsecondary education during imprisonment. For the United States Taggart (1972) "liberally estimated that there are 30,000 inmates in prisons and jails who could benefit ..." from access to higher education opportunities. I think it's safe to conjecture that doubling the number of those currently involved in any country would strain neither the student potential not the availabel education resources. Establishing access to these resources at the best point of intervention poses an immediate problem and challenge. Where and when to use college resources as a program alternative will differ from situation to situation and from country to country.

In the United States the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AAJC) in cooperation with the United States Office of Education, Fund for the improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), is involved in an experimental/demonstration project (Offender Assistance Through Community Colleges) which incorporates, in part, the kinds of activities which can be generated by postsecondary education institutions, at the community level, to help keep some first offenders out of prison.

Three communities, Jacksonville, Florida, Charlotte, North Carolina and Denver, Colorado are working with their corresponding criminal justice systems to provide a continuum of services to first felony offenders. It is not anticipated that all first offender referrals to the program will become college students. Some may; others may be provided occupational counseling, job development and job placement services. Still others may be referred to family counseling, mental health or other community service centers. The basic purpose of this Offender Assistance project is to provide courts and probation services with one additional alternative to imprisonment and its negative impact on the offender.

School Districts

A phenomenom which seems to be peculiar to the U. S., the prison school district began to emerge in the late 1960's. These school districts, which now exist in Texas, Connecticut, Illinois, New Jersey, Arkansas and Ohio function as separate educational delivery systems for correctional institutions in their respective states. They have their own boards of education, superintendents and staff. In two states, New Jersey and Illinois, the school districts include education through the junior

college level. Virginia recently enacted legislation to adopt the school district concept and at least six additional states are considering it.

Inside vs Outside Programs and Technology

In the United States two simultaneous developments are taking place which will have a profound impact on college programs for prisoners. Study-release for college courses is gaining slow but steady acceptance at a time when audio-visual technology is making it increasingly easier to provide college level courses inside the prison.

It is difficult to forecast how the two trends will be combined in the United States. In other countries which have not yet experimented with prison college programs the technology should make the availability of college programs on an inside basis much easier than they were initially in the United States. On the other hand, the availability of the more sophisticated technology could retard the introduction of study-release.

Critical Issues

Several areas of concern cut across all prison postsecondary education programs in all countries and are important whether or not the courses are offered inside or outside the institution or on a pre-commitment or post-release basis.

Costs

Prisons in the United States, Canada, Scandinavia and Western Europe which have education programs generally provide them at no cost to the prisoner up through the high school level. Postsecondary courses, where offered, frequently must be paid for completely, or in part, by the prisoner/student. Practices vary by country ranging from full payment by the student to full payment by the correctional system. In the federal system in the United States, where budget resources permit and the course of study is an established program goal, all costs may be paid by the correctional institution. In other cases the federal correctional institution may pay only up to 1/2 the costs involved and the individual student will pay the remainder. In some cases all costs must be borne by the student. The institution's budget, the course the student wants, the student's personal financial situation and related factors contribute to the decision making process.

In the United States an additional cost problem grows out of the application of out-of-state fee schedules to prisoners who are not "residents" of the state in which they are incarcerated. The situation is particularly aggravated in federal correctional institutions which tend to serve as regional facilities housing prisoners from

many states. A recent informal survey by Dr. Donald A. Deppe, Education Director of the Bureau of prisons, of states in which federal prisons operate revealed that sixteen states charge in-state resident fees for federal prisoner/students and six charge the higher non-resident fees. State and county prisons are faced with a maze of in-county, out-of-county and related education fee schedules.

Some colleges in the United States and Canada charge a flat fee ranging roughly from $300.00 to $750.00 per "inside" course and the prison may have as many students in the class as is feasible - generally from 20 to 50. Where instructors travel significant distances mileage fees are an additional cost.

Since most prisoners have limited or no funds and their families are similarly situated, costs become a critical issue in providing access to higher education on any basis to the offender population.

Many prisons throughout the world still lack sufficient funds to offer adequate literacy, elementary, high school or vocational training programs. Postsecondary

education seems a long way down the road in such cases.

Despite all this, the picture is by no means dismal. Some postsecondary education institutions are sensitive to cost problems and provide quality education at reasonable prices. Many dedicated instructors and volunteer tutors travel considerable distances, to and from isolated institutions, to teach one or two hours, sometimes after completing a full teaching schedule elsewhere. In many situations the readiness of the education establishment and volunteers to provide services more than equals the readiness of the correctional community to use them.

Financial assistance available from non-prison sources has also helped meet cost problems. In the United States prisoner/students are generally eigible to apply for education assistance on the same basis as other students.

Veteran's Education Benefits, Vocational Rehabilitation Assistance, Basic Education Opportunity Grants (BEOG), work-study programs, federally insured student loans as well as private group scholarships and grants are increasingly available to prisoner/students. Private

foundations have also provided ad hoc assistance in special cases.

These education assistance funds are generally available both on an "inside" and "outside" basis. In Canada, for example a Donner Foundation group has made it possible for seven prisoner/students from the British Columbia Penitentiary and Matsqui Prison to live at a group residential center and attend the University of Victoria.

Geographic Isolation of Institutions

Another critical problem arises from the relative geographic isolation of some correctional institutions. Despite recent trends to locate new correctional facilities either in or near urban centers, as well as the urbanization of once isolated rural areas, some correctional institutions are still great distances from needed resources. In such cases correspondence courses, the U.W.W. - Open University approach and various audio-visual systems are welcome alternatives. But as experience has demonstrated, despite the best intentions, initial high student motivation levels are not sustained and correspondence courses and other

individualized study dropout rates continue to be high, both in and out of prison and in all countries.

Closed circuit television and other audio-visual systems in the United States increasingly bring college courses to places which would otherwide be unable to offer any postsecondary programs. However, these efforts are not widespread and operate primarily under experimental/ demonstration conditions.

Post-Release Linkages

In addition to the problem of costs and geographic isolation new ways need to be discovered to strengthen post-release linkages between the student and a particular postsecondary institution. Ideally, this should involve establishing contact with college admissions staff before the prisoner/student's release, including specific procedural steps to insure the enrollment of the student before or very shortly after returning to the community in which the receiving education institution is located. There is considerable research evidence to suggest that the first three months after release from prison are critical. In addition, there is a direct correlation

between the age of released prisoners and the liklihood that they will get into further difficulties. These factors, among others, suggest that early post-release linkages into structured education situations are essential components of prison education efforts.

Transferability of Earned "Credits"

Many prisoners, particularly in the United States, transfer from one institution to another in the same state while serving their sentence, and among states in the nationwide federal system. The issue of the transferability of credits is therefore, very important. The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) in the United States and other arrangements provide strong foundations on which to build the general transferability of earned college credits. However, the transferability of credits between education institutions remains a stumbling block in efforts to maintain education involvement of the offender/student population, particularly if the student's transfer takes place before a specific course is completed. This dilemma has stimulated efforts by correctional educators, such as those by Elizabeth Lebherz, Education Director of the Maryland Corrections Department, to develop state-wide

consortia of postsecondary institutions for interchangeability of college credits.

"Prime Time" for Education

Educators throughout the world also have to join with correctional administrators to discover ways to schedule education participation by prisoners during some daylight hours instead of relegating prison education programs to the evening hours only. Education, as a program alternative, must be regarded as a reasonable competitor with prison industries, institutional maintenance, group counseling and other demands on available institution program time. The Prison - Schools in France and institutions which serve youthful offenders in other countries have already done this for some young prisoners. Education, particularly postsecondary education, for adult prisoners in most countries, continues to be an evening or "after-work" activity.

Physical Facilities

Housing and study space for the prisoner/student is a world-wide problem. A minimum of space and privacy to facilitate studying and the accomplishment of education

assignments can be a critical variable which affects the student's continuation in a program. Since most prisoners are housed in institutions designed for containment and/or punishment rather than programs, it takes a great deal of imagination and good will to provide positive learning environments.

Libraries and Education Aids

Libraries and the availability of books are similarly important. Some correctional institutions have met library needs creatively by using local mobile library units, inter-library loan arrangements or by providing time for library work during study-release hours to implement prison library collections. Special groups in many countries such as the Association of American Publishers, Inc., and the American Booksellers Association in the United States have donated reference and other books to prisons but as LeDonne (1974) reports in her exhaustive study of prison libraries in the United States the library situation in prisons remains marginal.

The use of tape recorders and typewriters is still viewed with suspicion by the staff of many correctional institutions. In those countries in which

this type of equipment is readily available and reasonably priced, members of the education community can make an important contribution in working with prisons, first, to develop an understanding of the need to use these machines in the education process and secondly, to assist in supervising the appropriate use of such mechanical aids by the students.

Conclusion

No one concerned with providing greater access to postsecondary education opportunities in prisons need worry about running out of challenges in the near future. Access to education opportunities for prisoners will, in many respects, parallel the rate of growth in access to these opportunities by students generally. A major goal therefore, must be to continue to enlarge postsecondary education opportunities for all potential students in all countries. There is every reason to believe that the continued growth of such opportunities generally will result in corresponding increases for prisoner/students.

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